

# SPICY ADVENTURE STORIES



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# THE HEAD

By STAN WARNER

LIEUTENANT RICHARD BARCLAY, clad in common seaman's clothes, came ashore at dusk and approached the village. Near the edge of it was a rambling inn where he had been told he would find the man he sought; namely, Captain Edward Teach, known as Blackbeard. As he came up to the inn he heard the sound of loud laughter and rude jests. He heard also a woman's cry.

The year was 1723, the month November, and it was dusk. Barclay, commanding His Majesty's schooner *King Philip* and the sloop-of-war *Pearl*, bore a written commission from Governor Spottiswoode of the Sovereign Colony of Virginia. It authorized him to take the pirate, destroy his ship, and wipe out his crew. None of the colonists being willing to pilot his ships across the dangerous shoals and sandbars guarding Ocracoke Inlet, on the North Carolina Coast, he had come ashore himself to reconnoiter.

Unobserved, he reached a window at the rear of the inn. He peered inside, and the sight that met his eyes made his gorge rise.

A group of villainous-looking seamen were gathered in a half-circle upon the floor of the taproom. A blind negro slave scraped at a fiddle. At one end of the room, seated upon an inverted hogshead of rum, was a mountainous man whose face was the most sinister

Barclay had ever seen. He sat enthroned like a king of hell.

A brace of pistols were thrust in the wide sash around his waist, and a cutlass hung suspended from a leather harness that crossed diagonally over his cask-like chest. The lower half of his face was masked behind a great fan-like black beard and his eyes were alight with a fiendish glow.

Before him a young girl cringed in abject terror. Her long, wavy brown hair fell about her slender shoulders like a cascade of water; and only her tremendous fear marred the beauty of her youthful features. Her hips were lithe and narrow, and her breasts firm beneath the tight lacing of her bodice.

He heard the enthroned, black-bearded man roar out, "God's blood! She's my wife, and she shall do as I command!" At which the girl cowered and cried out once more.

She raised her eyes in supplication and in pleading, "Edward!" she whispered. "You would not have me do this—before all these men—"

"Strip, I said . . . Strip, wench, before I flay the living skin from your white body!" "God's wounds, but I shall show these rascals what a pretty trollop you are!"

The girl trembled. "I—I cannot—!" she whimpered.

Then the black-bearded man leaped from his hogshead with a

# OF DEATH

*The girl loved Blackbeard the pirate, even though he whipped her before his men. It was only after Barclay rescued her that she learned another meaning of love*



To his surprise he saw the girl who was Captain Teach's wife—standing beside her husband.

lightness, a swiftness that belied his vast bulk. He reached forth, snatching at the girl's garment. He ripped it downward.

She tried to cover her breasts with her tiny hands, but the black-bearded man gave her a buffet across the face with the flat of his tremendous hand. The blow knocked her sprawling.

AS Barclay peered through the inn's window, his own hand went toward his belt, seeking his pistol. He desired nothing more than to send a ball crashing through the bearded man's gross skull. But his fingers encountered nothing; and then he remembered that he had come ashore unarmed, in order to allay any possible suspicion. For a moment he contemplated leaping into the room, flinging himself to the girl's defense. But such a move would be folly, he knew full well. They were twenty to one against him, and they were all armed to the teeth.

He continued to watch, beating down the surging anger that rose almost uncontrollably to his temples. He saw the bearded man's hands grasp at the girl's long hair. His fingers entwined themselves viciously in those soft tresses. Brutally he dragged her to her feet. And then, there before all those grinning villians, he ripped the dress from her body.

Despite Barclay's rage, he could not help drinking in the charming contours of the girl's revealed figure. Her legs and thighs were as white as the sands of Florida's reefs, and as smooth as flowing honey. Her hips were boyish and

yet feminine; her stomach flat and flawless. In all the days of his seafaring Barclay had never seen a figure more perfect.

"Now, you vixen!" the bearded man roared out. "Dance! Dance, as you dance for me in the cabin of my schooner."

At his words the blind slave scraped at his fiddle; and then the girl began to dance, slowly, sinuously, with the grace of paradise itself—the grace of paradise, and the blood-stirring earthiness of a woman of the streets. Her breasts swayed, and her body, her hips, undulated in sensuous simulation. She raised her sweet arms over her head. Her half-clothed body was like a flame that set fire to a man's veins.

"Faster! Faster, ye trollop!" the bearded man bellowed. He snatched at a short whip that dangled from the belt of one of his followers. He snapped it out, brought it stinging down across the cringing girl's bare white shoulders. The rawhide left a red weal, like a crimson brand against the snow-like purity of her flesh. Like a devil's mark.

Over the roaring laughter of the men who watched, Barclay heard a grog-cracked voice say, "A fitting entertainment indeed—We'll have it in our minds' eyes when we come to grips with Barclay's ships-of-war in the morning!"

"Barclay!" the bearded man snorted contemptuously. "I'll keel-haul him and blow him out of the water tomorrow!"

BARCLAY'S eyes narrowed. Then the presence of his vessels outside the shoals was known

here! This, then was the reason why no colonist would dare pilot his two ships into the inlet; his bosun's tale had been correct. And the bearded man's words confirmed something he had already known full well. He—with his barrel chest and great beard and piercing eyes—he was Captain Teach himself. He was Blackbeard, the man Barclay had come to destroy!

Again the pirate lifted the whip; again brought it down across the girl's naked back. She wailed and tried to escape him. "Dance!" he snarled at her. "Dance, I say!" He whipped her legs, so that perforce she must raise and lower them swiftly to avoid the stinging lashes he dealt her.

Barclay could stand it no longer. He turned from the window, ready to fling himself through the doorway of the inn, launch himself headlong into that evil company. And as he turned, he brushed against a crouching form.

It was a youth, white-faced and grim. In the gloom he had crept up silently behind Barclay; had watched, over his shoulders, the scene inside the taproom. Now he snatched at a pistol in his belt. The youth raised it, cocked it, and fired. The report was deafening.

A ball went screaming through the window. Through the acrid cloud of smoke that veiled Barclay's vision and stung his nostrils, he saw, Blackbeard leap sideways as the slug smashed into the far wall of the taproom.

Barclay whirled on the youth, grasped at his smoking pistol, wrenched it from him. "You fool!" he said sharply. "Why did you do

that? Now they will punish you—"

"That girl—she is my sister!" the youth answered in a trembling voice.

Barclay pushed the youth. "Run!" he commanded. "Run, before they find you here. These are dangerous men, boy." He grasped his shoulders, spun him around, sent him flying.

The youth disappeared in the darkness just as Blackbeard's men boiled out of the taproom. Yelling like fiends from hell, the buccaneers rounded the corner of the inn. They saw Barclay standing there, alone, with the smoking pistol still in his hand.

Blackbeard strode up to him, his cutlass raised. He darted the razor-sharp end of the blade at his throat. "Zounds, ye dog!" he roared in his great, bellowing voice. His eyes were pin-points of fire, and his bearded lips were twisted in a savage, vindictive snarl. "Ye'd take a shot from ambush at Captain Teach, would ye?"

Barclay met his gaze squarely. "Tis a pity I missed," He told him with all the boldness he could muster.

For an instant, he thought the pirate was going to run him through. Then Blackbeard's blade lowered, and his mouth widened in a savage grin. "God's wounds, but the man has nerve!" he cried out. He stared at him. "Who be ye?"

Barclay's heart leaped. Blackbeard had not recognized him then; did not know that he was Richard Barclay, Lieutenant in His Majesty's Navy. Had he known, the pirate would have spitted him on the points of his cutlass without

hesitation. But at it was, his anonymity and his effrontery had given him time.

**B**ARCLAY stared back with an arrogance he was far from feeling. He said, "My name is Smith—and I do not happen to like the color of your damnable eyes, Captain Teach!"

Blackbeard actually took a backward step at the venom Barclay put into his words. And then he roared with laughter, so that his entire, great body shook. "Blood and death, but ye've hot blood!" he bellowed.

"Would that my aim had been as fair as my courage!" Barclay said evenly.

The pirate raised his heavy, bushy brows. "A fighting-cock, I trow—and no mistake! Hell's bones, but I think I shall test your courage, Mister Smith. We'll see how well it wears!" He turned to his evil followers. "Seize him and pinion him, my hearties! We'll take him out to the schooner; and when dawn comes, we'll see if his knees knock together when he walks the plank!"

Many hands were upon Barclay, bearing him down to earth. He felt strong lines being passed around his wrists and ankles, gyng him. And then he was lifted, carried to a waiting long-boat, flung roughly into its scuppers. Blackbeard and his villainous crew piled into the boat; the men laid hold of the oars.

Moments later, Barclay was carried aboard Teach's anchored schooner, with its skull and crossbones floating from the mast-head in the white light of the moon.

He was thrust into a noxious chamber, deep in the stinking hold of the ship. He was left alone.

This gave Barclay time to gather his wits. He took stock of his situation, and found it desperate indeed. He was a prisoner in Blackbeard's piratical hands, and he would walk the plank at dawn. That would be the end of Richard Barclay! he thought.

And yet—he was still alive; and while a spark of breath remained in his lungs, all hope could not yet be lost. His tactics in outfacing Captain Teach had won him a night's reprieve, at least. That much he had gained.

He tested his bonds; but they had been well tied. And in the deep darkness of his prison he could find nothing with which he might sever them. For a long time he lay silent, conserving his strength, planning desperately.

And then, after hours had passed, he heard the door of his prison open slowly and cautiously.

A dim, shadowy figure approached him as he lay sprawled and helpless. It leaned over him. He felt a pannikin of water at his lips. "Drink!" a soft whisper bade him.

He drank thankfully, for his lips and mouth were parched. When he had drained the last sweet drop he whispered, "Who are you—and why do you do this for me?"

"I—I am Captain Teach's wife. And I owe you this much for having saved me from my humiliation there at the inn."

At once, he knew her for the girl who had danced, nude, in the tap-

room, under the cruel urge of Blackbeard's whip. And a plan leaped full-blown into his mind. He spoke to her once again, in a silent whisper. "Do you know why I fired that shot through the window?"

"Why did you?" she asked.

"Because I could not bear to see you treated so cruelly. Because you are so beautiful. Because I



It was the moment Barclay had been waiting for. He leaped in, ran his sword home.

could not bear to think of you being displayed before all those villains!"

"You—you make pretty speeches, sirrah," she flattered.

"A pretty girl has evoked them, lass," he answered. Then, "Per-

haps it is just as well that I am bound and helpless."

"Why?" she asked him.

"Were my arms free, I would sweep you into them and smother your sweet mouth with kisses!" he said boldly.

She drew a sharp breath. "You are an arrogant rogue!"

"I am a man in love." Barclay answered.

"What—what would you do if you were freed?"

His heart leaped in his throat. "I would seize you and taste the loveliness of your lips!" he told her.

She was silent a long while. Then he heard her hand rustle toward him; felt a sharp blade slicing into the ropes at his wrists and ankles. Suddenly he was free, ungyved. "Make good your boasts!" the girl whispered daringly.

He reached toward her in the solid darkness. Beneath his feet, the ship rolled lazily in the slow ground-swell. He found the girl, clasped her in his arms, drew her toward him. She came, not unwillingly. Her slender figure was clad in but a single garment—a clinging shift of heavy Oriental silk. Through it he could feel the sweeping contours of her firm breasts, the lithe smoothness of her hips . . . he kissed her.

Her lips parted, her arms went about his neck.

LATER, he said "Come with me. We will escape together—get away from Captain Teach—"

She arose, pushed herself out of his seeking arms. "No. I—I fear him—"

"You fear him. You are false

to him. But you love him!" he accused her. "In spite of his cruelties. Am I not right?" he said.

"Y-yes!" she admitted ruefully in the darkness.

Barclay understood. There are some women who are made that way. He kissed her once more in farewell. Then he slipped out through the open door of his prison, gained the upper deck of the ship. Unobserved and unhalting and unchallenged, he went over the rail and into the smooth waters of the inlet. He swam past the shoals, out toward his own anchored vessels.

Soon he was once more in the cabin of his own schooner, safely escaped from Blackbeard's clutches. On the morrow, he would attempt to take his two ships through the sand-bars, even though he had no pilot to guide the way. Then, if fortune were with him, he would come to grips with Captain Teach.

AT DAWN a boat scraped alongside his schooner. The lookout raised a warning cry. He leaped from his cabin, out to the deck.

He stared down at the small boat that had come alongside. And in the growing grey light, he recognized its lone passenger.

It was the youth he had saved, back at the inn. The youth who had fired at Blackbeard, through the taproom window. The youth whose pistol he had taken; whose blame Barclay had assumed.

The youth clambered aboard. When he saw and recognized Barclay, he tensed. He said "You—! What are you doing here?"

Barclay smiled at the youth and

said. "I am Lieutenant Barclay, boy. Commander of this ship. Might I ask you the same question you have asked me, "what are you doing here?"

The youth was pale and obviously nervous. "I—I came to offer my services, sir," he said in his trembling treble voice.

"Your services?"

"Yes, sir. I—I know the channel fairly well. You seek a pilot, so that you may enter the inlet and attack Blackbeard's ship. I—I think I can guide your vessels safely through the shoals."

Barclay smiled. "Do you realize what the consequences will be to yourself, lad, if Teach and his men happen to win the fight? They'll make you rue the day you ever helped me!"

"I—I'll take that chance, sir," the youth answered.

"Why should you run such a risk?" he asked the youth.

"Because—because Teach married my sister; and even though she loves him insanely, he mistreats her. Cruelly. Therefore I want to kill him. And besides—now that I know who you are, sir, I have another reason for desiring to aid you. I owe you a debt. You saved me last night, from the consequences of my folly—when I fired at Captain Teach."

Barclay patted the youth's shoulder, and said, "Very well, you shall pilot the vessel through the shoals."

WITH the lad to pilot them their two ships crept slowly through the shoal-waters. When they had reached a point perhaps a mile distant from Captain

Teach's vessels, the inlet grew too shallow for them to venture any further with sail. Accordingly they furled their canvas and moved forward under the impetus of their long sweeps.

Behind Barclay's ship, the other vessel under his command hung to their stern. Through Barclay's glass, he perceived that Blackbeard had run up his Jolly Roger; and that he had unfurled his sails as though in preparation to come forth and meet them. But he had not yet drawn in his anchor.

Barclay's mate came to him on the poop. He saluted. "Sir," he said, "I beg to report that the shoals are very nearly scraping the keel. Me thinks that lad doesn't know the channel as well as he pretends—or else he's a traitor deliberately running us aground—"

Even as the mate spoke, Barclay felt a sudden soft jar and jerk; then his schooner lay still. They were fast on a sand-bar!

Barclay looked astern. His other ship, the sloop *Pearl*, had come to similar grief!

"Let go your sheets!" he roared angrily. "Push her off the lee!" His bosun spun his wheel desperately; a dozen men leaped for the sweeps, plunged them into the water. But the sweeps only sank into the mud, rolling the water a dirty brown.

The mate came running dragging the youth with him—the lad who had piloted them into peril. "It's his fault!" the second in command rasped. "He's got us into this!"

The lad was white-faced. Barclay reached forth, clutched his

shoulders, yanked him into his cabin. "Take off your shirt!" he said harshly.

"Wh-what?"

"Off with your shirt! I'm going to give you ten lashes for this day's work!" He reached for his nine-thonged cat-whip.

The youth went white. "Please, sir—"

"Take off your shirt or I'll rip it off you!" he said.

The youth's fingers went to the buttons of his shirt, unfastened them. He pulled the garment off over his head—

Barclay stared. He said, "God in heaven! A girl!"

She stood before him; and as he saw the loveliness of her small, perfect breasts, the whiteness of her slender body. He suddenly realized that she was beautiful. Her face had an elfin wistful quality, and her eyes were wide and blue. He wondered how he could ever have been deceived by her boy's garments . . . wondered how he could ever have mistaken her sex, despite her shortcut hair, her masculine breeches.

She came toward him slowly, and her eyes were wet with tears. "Please—believe me!" she whispered. "I did not run you aground purposely—"

He stared at her, too amazed to be other than silent and wordless.

**A** GAIN she spoke. "What I told you was true, Lieutenant Barclay. Captain Teach's wife is my sister. And I wanted to kill him, so that she would be released from his cruelty—" She touched his arm, and he felt fire dart through his veins. She was like her sister,

in a way; the same features, the same lovely breasts, the same white skin . . . only softer, more beautiful, less full-blown. A wave of longing swept over him, unaccountably. Then, because he could not hold himself, he took her into his arms.

She clung to him. He would have kissed her—

He heard a thunderous pounding on the door of his cabin. "Lieutenant Barclay, the pirate is approaching, sir!" the mate shouted.

Barclay leaped for the door. "Remain here!" he told the girl. Then he left her, launched himself out upon the deck.

Blackbeard's schooner was within a quarter-mile of them, and the distance was narrowing. Barclay could see the muzzles of his four cannonades and his single long-gun.

He cupped his hands and roared a command across the still water. "Heave to, Captain Teach!" he called. "Heave to, and surrender in the name of the King and of Governor Spottiswoode of Virginia!"

"Governor Spottiswoode has no authority in North Carolina!" Blackbeard roared back his defiant challenge. "This territory is governed by Governor Eden!"

"Then in the name of the King, I bid you surrender!"

"To hell with the King!" Captain Teach bellowed through his great black beard. By now the pirate was almost upon them. He turned to his villainous crew. "Let 'em havè it, by God's blood!"

Barclay's men were still pushing frantically at their sweeps, en-

deavoring to get them free of the bar. Already their schooner was beginning to slide off, to move a little. Barclay yelled a command. "Leave the sweeps! Man your guns! Stand by to repel boarders!"

His crew leaped to their stations. And at that instant, Blackbeard gave them a broadside. Barclay heard a deafening, thunderous crash as the four cannonades belched fire and smoke; then like a mighty echo, the single long-gun spewed flame.

Through the smoke that enveloped them like a drifting cloud, Barclay saw a round half-dozen of his men go down in pools of blood that stained the white decks. There was a crashing and rending of broken wood, and clean yellow splinters flew through the air like pistol-balls.

Now Barclay's men were training their guns upon Teach's ship. "Fire!" he cried as loudly as he could. Torches were applied to torch-holes; his cannon roared out their flaming answer to Blackbeard's broadside.

The shock of their massed fire, added to the impact of the pirate's volley against their hull, freed them at last from the clutching grip of the sand-spit upon which they had grounded. They floated free. As the clouds of gunpowder smoke drifted away in the morning breeze, Barclay saw that they were almost hull to hull with Teach's ship. His men were racing wildly about the deck. He saw the glitter of grappling-hooks as they prepared to board.

They were too close for cannon-fire now. A rattle of musketry

burst from Blackbeard's men, and sloop *Pearl*, still hard aground; could render the *King Philip* no help. And Blackbeard's men outnumbered Barclay's men three to two.

"Muskets and pistols!" he roared. "Give them hell!"

His crew was firing their pieces as fast as they could load and pull trigger. Captain Teach's pirates returned their fire viciously.

Abruptly, Barclay saw something that brought a cry of surprise to his lips. The brown-haired girl who was Captain Teach's wife was standing beside her blackbearded husband—and she held a pistol in each hand! She raised the twin weapons. They belched streaks of flame. Barclay felt a ball sting into his thigh, just burning the skin.

And then the girl suddenly stiffened, swayed. Her pistols dropped to the deck. She clutched at her breast; Barclay saw a glint of red trickling between her fingers. She sank down, slowly.

She had been struck by a musket-bullet fired by one of Barclay's crew!

And at that instant, the two vessels ground together.

**B**LACKBEARD'S men leaped railward with their grappling-hooks, bound the ships together. Barclay saw the pirates swarming over his rail, cutlasses and pistols in their fists, knives clenched between their savage jaws. And at their head, leading them, was Captain Teach—Blackbeard—the first man to set foot on the *King Philip*'s deck!

(Continued on page 111)

# The Head of Death

[Continued from page 55]

"All hands—repel boarders!" Barclay barked. Then he ran forward, into the thick of it. His pistol was in his left fist. With his right hand he swept his cutlass out of its scabbard.

Blackbeard loomed before him, grinning evilly through his beard. "God's wounds and hell's blood!" He snarled. "So 'tis you!" He raised his pistol.

Barclay fired first. His ball struck Blackbeard's right hand, knocking his pistol into the sea and shattering the clenched fist into a crimson pulp. He flung his unloaded weapon full into Blackbeard's evil face. It smashed against the pirate's mouth, and he spat bloody froth and a rasping oath. He leaped.

Barclay side-stepped, drawing his second pistol. He fired. Captain Teach staggered, grunted. But still he came on. His cutlass was raised high. It whirled down.

Barclay raised his own blade, parried the stroke desperately. There was a carmine stain on Blackbeard's shirt-front where Barclay's second shot had smashed into his belly; but the man seemed inhuman, oblivious to pain, incapable of death. He slashed at Barclay again, and his cutlass licked into the lieutenant's shoulder. Barclay felt hot blood gushing down his left arm. He clenched his teeth and a red haze filmed his eyes. This murderous, evil mon-

ster had killed hundreds of men and women in his career of piracy; but by God, Barclay was determined to end him now! He lunged, and his cutlass sliced into Teach's neck.

Great gouts of blood spewed from the raw wound. Teach's head lolled grotesquely. But abruptly he straightened, flung himself toward Barclay once more. Barclay beat aside the cutlass, slashed at the pirate again and again. His point found Blackbeard's left eye, ripped it out of its socket. For an instant Teach's blade lowered as pain raged through him.

It was a moment Barclay was waiting for. He leaped in, ran his sword through the pirate's guts.

Teach sank to the deck, lay still for a split-second, then quivered, tried to rise; tried to force his great body upward with the strength of his mighty arms. His good hand reached for his belt, withdrew a pistol. He aimed it at Barclay—

And then he collapsed on his face as the weapon dropped from his nerveless, thick fingers. Barclay leaped toward him, leaned over him.

TEACH rolled his great, shaggy head so that he could look at Barclay. "A—game-cock—that's what—ye—are!" he gasped. "An' now that my wife is—dead—I shan't be—sorry to—go—"

Blood gushed from his flaccid lips, trickled down nauseatingly into his matted black beard. And thus he died.

His men, seeing their leader had been vanquished, set up a cry for quarter; threw down their arms; surrendered. More than two-thirds of their number had been killed in the fight.

Barclay roared a command to his crew. "Take them and tie them up!" He shouted triumphantly. "They'll all swing from yard-arms in the James River, five days from now!"

Blackbeard and his evil, murderous buccaneers had been swept from the sea at last.

Now that her sister was dead, killed on the deck of Blackbeard's ship, Nancy Saxon had no further reason to remain in the Carolinas. And so she was returning with the lieutenant to Virginia. To become Nancy Barclay.

